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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5544
INFO RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 1622
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 7459
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 1718

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 002195

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [FI](#) [BU](#) [EUN](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY: INVITATION TO BURMESE FM AN EU EXPERIMENT

REF: A. STATE 124139

[1](#)B. BARRASSO-DERETIC 1/20/06 E-MAIL

Classified By: Acting Political Minister-Counselor E. Candace Putnam for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Poloff delivered Ref A demarche to Giuseppe Mistretta, MFA Office Director for Southeast Asia, August 2, stressing U.S. disappointment with the Finnish Government's decision to invite the Burmese Foreign Minister to the September ASEM meeting in Helsinki. Mistretta responded that the invitation was a bit of an experiment within the EU, giving member states an opportunity to voice their concerns about human rights and the need for democracy building to a representative of the Burmese government, rather than just talking to themselves. He noted that the EU did not want a repetition of the Rotterdam meeting and the potential negative impact on overall EU-ASEAN relations (Ref B). Poloff pointed out that recently ASEAN itself had been more critical of the Burmese regime, and that the Foreign Minister was not in a position to usefully convey back EU concerns. Mistretta asked if the U.S. had a particular official in mind as an alternative to the Foreign Minister.

[1](#)2. (C) Noting that Finland was on the pro-dialogue side of the internal EU debate, as was Italy, Mistretta said the EU countries who were opposed to contact with the Burmese regime (UK, Denmark, Netherlands) had compromised instead of making the difference of opinion public. For Italy, according to Mistretta, Helsinki would provide an opportunity to create a "very" critical dialogue, rather than allowing Burma's leadership to become ever more isolated. However, Mistretta reiterated that this decision was based on a compromise among EU states and he expected countries that had been critical of the current position to push for a reevaluation of EU policy before too long.
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